



City of Middletown Public Works Department
245 Dekoven Drive
Middletown CT 06457
860-638-4850

Testimony in Support of:

H.B. No. 5139 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR TIRES.

H.B. No. 5142 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR CERTAIN GAS CYLINDERS.

Dear Senator Cohen, Representative Gresko and distinguished members of the Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to support the above proposals. My name is Kim O'Rourke and I am the Recycling Coordinator for the City of Middletown. I have worked in this position for thirty years and have extensive experience with numerous waste initiatives. I am especially familiar with the struggles of municipal government trying to manage the waste stream with limited resources.

Middletown has been an active member of the CT Coalition of Sustainable Materials Management (CCSMM) and was fully involved in the extensive research into numerous waste issues and the development of the Menu of Options released last January. Middletown is currently implementing many of those options.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is crucial to developing a better solid waste management system. **The City of Middletown is supporting all the EPR proposals before you today but this testimony is specific to HB 5139 regarding tires, and HB 5142 regarding gas cylinders. A separate testimony has been submitted for SB 115 regarding consumer packaging.**

EPR is widely used in Canada and Europe and is gaining support across the US. In CT we have four EPR programs – electronics, mattresses, paint and thermostats. Middletown participates in all of these programs. The EPR framework has made it easier for residents, less costly to the City and stabilized and improved the management of disposing these items. The City has saved over \$100,000 annually with these programs. These EPR programs for hard to recycle programs are critical, and we fully support the proposals for gas cylinders and tires.

GAS CYLINDERS

Municipalities across CT are facing significant challenges in managing pressurized gas cylinders. Challenges include disposal costs, storage requirements, safety concerns including explosions in trucks and at both trash and recycling facilities, injuries, damaged equipment and litter at local parks. As a member of the CT Product Stewardship Council, the City of Middletown supports an EPR proposal to develop a program to make it easier for residents to recycle these containers. It is important that all tanks up to 20 lb be included in this proposal and that it includes oxygen, helium and any other

pressurized gas. These items often end up at our transfer station, or illegally dumped, and ultimately brought to our transfer station. Collection services from the transfer station can be unpredictable. Sometimes the City will wait weeks for the tanks to be collected. The smaller 1 lb tanks are especially difficult for residents to dispose. An effective EPR would alleviate these problems, making it easier for residents, less burdensome to municipal transfer stations and safer for everyone.

TIRES

Tires are a difficult and expensive material for municipalities to handle. Markets are hard to find and most servicers demand a tire count, which is impossible for Middletown, with our small transfer station staff. Over the years, the facilities willing to accept our tires has dwindled down to one location 50 miles away.

Tires also contain materials that are dangerous to our environment and if left outside, will collect water and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Illegally dumped tires impact our environment, our public health, and increase costs to our City. We are grateful to the Connecticut River Conservancy and the numerous clean up volunteers who have collected tires from the woods and rivers over the past many years in Middletown. But volunteer clean ups and limited city budgets are not a sustainable solution to this problem.

An EPR program for tires will develop a free and accessible program for residents to use for tire disposal. It would guarantee a place for the City to bring the tires, reduce illegal dumping and encourage tire manufacturers to develop more sustainable ways to manage unwanted tires. Studies from Canada show that EPR virtually eliminated the illegal dumping problems. In order for this to work, a mandatory program is required to level the playing field. The companies that profit from making and selling tires must be involved in managing the disposal of their product. Voluntary programs have not worked. Studies are not needed. Licensing is not a comprehensive solution. This issue has been discussed for years. It is time for tire manufacturers to actively participate and be fiscally responsible for the end of life management of their products. Expecting municipalities and taxpayers, to absorb the full costs of managing these waste materials is not realistic or practical anymore. If we want to reduce our waste, we need to think about it differently and update our programs. Producers need to and should play a role in managing and financing the end product of what they produce.

Both of these initiatives would improve consumer education on the disposal of these products. We have found the education component of EPR programs to be essential. It elevates the conversation and that combined with local recycling information is very effective. The communication strategies of the Mattress Recycling Council and Paintcare have helped improve our recycle rates of those items. We would expect the same from an EPR program for gas cylinders and tires.

Thank you for your consideration of these important proposals. By all of us working together, we can create a better waste management system that will be easier for residents, cost effective and better for the environment.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Kim O'Rourke

Middletown Recycling Coordinator

Kim.orourke@middletownct.gov / 860-638-4855